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State Dept. Hides Facts of Soviet Radiation Barrage

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The State Department's carefully edited comments on the Soviet Union'srowave radiation bombardment of U.S. Embassy in Moscow raise more questions than they answer.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's comments that "this is a matter of great cacy which has many ramifications" not satisfied critics, even though he avoided a congressional investigation by having Deputy Under Secretary State Lawrence Eagleburger give the Senate Foreign Relations Committee a per-secret briefing.

It was agreed that the senators present would not reveal the substance of Eagleburger's briefing on progress in negotiating an end of the microwave bombardment of U.S. personnel in Moscow.

Although Chairman John Sparkman (D.-Ala.) and the committee are apparently satisfied, they have received only the most generalized assurance that the health and safety of U.S. personnel is "of overwhelming concern" to Kissinger.

Sen. Robert Dole (R.-Kan.), a strong critic of the State Department's failure to show earlier concern, was a guest of the committee at the most recent Eagleburger briefing. Barred from comment on Eagleburger's "secret" briefing explanation, he was asked if he was "satisfied" with what Kissinger and Eagleburger are doing.

"I guess I have to be satisfied, because I can't get any hard facts and the committee is accepting the explanations, at least for the moment," Dole said.

The Kansas Republican said he couldn't see why they put a secrecy lid on the briefing because he didn't tell us anything that was classified.

Dole said that the briefing did not contradict the fact that for many years the Soviet government has been deliberately directing microwave radiation into the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and there was a sharp increase in the dosages last year.

It has been directed at the working areas in the embassy and the office of the

Although the State Department had knowledge of the radiation for years, there is no evidence that any significant steps were taken to stop the practice until February, when embassy personnel complained and the problem became public.

In March, Dole expressed concern over what appeared to be a "flagrant" violation of basic decency by the Soviet Union and a weak-kneed response by the State Department.

Dole told the Senate, "I have been informed by sources which I respect of a pattern of illness in the sensitive areas of the embassy. These illnesses were not uniform, but there was a correlation between them and exposure to the irradiated area."

Dole said that it was his information that "the highest concentration of the microwave radiation is reported in the vicinity of the desk of our American ambassador, Walter Stoessel."

The State Department has confirmed that Ambassador Stoessel is suffering from a blood disease similar to leukemia.

Eagleburger assured the committee that Stoessel's illness was not caused, nor in any manner made worse, by the strong doses of radiation the Soviets played on his desk.

"It may be that there is no proof that the radiation caused the illness, but I am not willing to accept as final a general assurance that a bombardment of radiation has not had some impact on Ambassador Stoessel or others," Dole said.

Dole said it is of particular concern to him that the Soviets initially lied about the microwave radiation, and that when Kissinger first requested a cessation of the Russian ambassador, the Soviet response was to increase the dosage.

"At first the Russians lied about it and blamed the radiation on natural phenomena," Dole said. "Later they admitted its existence but claimed that it was intended to interfere with our radio receivers on the embassy roof."

The Kansas Republican explained that the U.S. agreed to permit a joint U.S.-KGB team using Russian equipment to monitor the U.S. Embassy for radiation "which had been conveniently turned off for the occasion."

"They [Eagleburger and Kissinger] insist that it is a sensitive situation, and that they must tread with care in the demands they make on the Soviets," Dole said.

"I can understand that this might be the case, but they are asking us to accept generalities and assurance that it is receiving a 'top priority' from Secretary Kissinger."

"...I don't really know what top priority means at the State Department, and I'm going to remain skeptical about this until I hear some facts, and get some clear answers to the questions asked by me and by people in the Foreign Service."

Embassy employees have received a classified "secret" briefing on the conditions and assurances that the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) and the AFSA Committee on Extraordinary Dangers will be kept apprised of all relevant facts.

This arrangement has been sharply criticized by AFSA President John Hemenway, who has been refused access to State Department records on the radiation.

Eagleburger says he has made material available to Harry Blaney, chairman of the AFSA Committee on Extraordinary Dangers, and Blaney has indicated acceptance of the State Department assurances. Hemenway charges "conflicts of interest" because Blaney is on the policy planning staff of the State Department, and is unlikely to object to Kissinger and Eagleburger policies.

While the State Department contends it was "working on" the radiation problem prior to February, it refuses to say what was being done or the date upon which those efforts were first made.

Has the Soviet Union stopped its radiation bombardment of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow? Even that simple question has no comment.